



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 6, 2008

FACT SHEET

MAYOR SANDERS WANTS SAN DIEGANS TO KEEP IT FLAT IN FEBRUARY AND BEYOND

COOL MONTHS AHEAD PERFECT FOR WATER CONSERVATION AND BEATING HISTORIC TREND TOWARD OVER-IRRIGATION

Mayor Jerry Sanders is calling on all San Diegans to beat historic trends toward over-irrigation by keeping their water use “flat in February” and through the cooler months ahead. The Mayor reports that forecasts from the National Climate Prediction Center show San Diego with cooler than normal temperatures over the next few months. Those temperatures will reduce the need for irrigation in San Diego gardens and landscapes allowing for greater conservation of water.

HISTORIC TRENDS SHOW WATER USE GOES UP IN FEBRUARY – UNNECESSARILY

San Diegans cut back on water use as temperatures fall between November and January. Even though cooler temperatures typically continue into spring, historic trends show that San Diegans begin increasing their water use again in late February or early March. That increased water use is inappropriate for landscapes and gardens in semi-arid climates like San Diego and reveals the beginning of a pattern of over-irrigation in our city.

Mayor Sanders has used every opportunity, including his State of the City address, to ask San Diegans to stop their habit of over-irrigation. Using satellite imagery and advanced technologies measuring water use patterns, the City of San Diego Water Department estimates that over-irrigation in San Diego wastes enough water to completely refill the Sweetwater Reservoir each year

EASY STEPS FOR ENDING OVER-IRRIGATION

Ending over-irrigation can help residents achieve substantial water savings outdoors where most of San Diego’s water supplies are used. The Mayor joins the City Water Department in recommending that everyone pay close attention to the settings on irrigation timers. Many homeowners are unaware of optimum watering cycles for their landscape and give plants more water than they need. Significant water savings can be achieved by simply adjusting sprinkler timers to match plant watering needs.

There are several City programs that can help San Diegans determine optimum irrigation cycles including:

1. **Water Use Surveys** - Commercial and residential customers can call the City at (619) 570-1999 to request a survey. A trained professional will assess the current irrigation system, look for inefficiencies, and develop a customized irrigation schedule for homeowners. This service is provided free of charge.
2. **The Landscape Watering Calculator** – Homeowners interested in getting started on better irrigation practices immediately can log on to www.sandiego.gov/water and click on the Landscape Watering Calculator tab. This nationally recognized tool lets homeowners follow a few simple steps to develop a customized irrigation schedule for their yards.
3. **Weather-based irrigation Controllers** – These “smart” controllers automatically adjust run times as the season and daytime temperatures change, and shut irrigation systems during rainy days. The City of San Diego currently offers substantial rebates for these irrigation controllers. Call (619) 570-1999, or visit www.sandiego.gov/water for more information on the rebate program.
4. **The Commercial Landscape Incentive Program** – In addition to the “smart” controller rebated program, commercial landscape property owners can also avail themselves of incentives for other water efficient irrigation fixtures. Call (619) 570-1999, or visit www.sandiego.gov/water for more information on these incentives.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WATER-WISE GARDENING

Mayor Sanders is encouraging San Diego residents to select drought tolerant “California Friendly” plants as they prepare for the spring planting season. The “California Friendly” list includes plants that use as much as 40% less water than traditional landscape choices with many offering the added benefit of being fire resistant.

To assist in selecting ‘California Friendly’ plants, the City of San Diego Water Department has worked with the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College and others to develop a list of ‘Nifty Fifty’ plants particularly well suited to San Diego. These are non-invasive and generally available at local nurseries.

The Nifty Fifty list may be easily downloaded at <http://www.sandiego.gov/water /conservation>.

A complete listing of nurseries and addresses featuring water-wise plants may be found at the Water Conservation Garden’s website at <http://www.thegarden.org>.

Located at Cuyamaca College, the 4½-acre Garden offers a variety of classes on many topics related to gardening and landscaping, for homeowners, children, and landscape professionals. It also has an extensive garden of ‘California Friendly’ plants, and a variety of exhibits about water-wise landscape design, maintenance, and irrigation. For more information, visit the Garden’s website or call (619) 660-0614.